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SHINTO

THE PRINCIPLE OF JAPAN

A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of Concordia Seminary

Department of Philosophy

In Partial Fulfilment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Bachelor of Divinity

by

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PREFACE

Shinto is the love of the Japanese people for their nation. It will never win the world to be its adherents. It is the faith of one people, the Japanese. For the Japanese, it will always be the religion of the nation. One wonders because of the simplicity of its doctrine. It enforces no especial moral code, no philosophical ideas and had no authoritative books to guide its believers in its pure state. Yet, the statement has been made, "In one form or another it will survive intellectual revolutions of the nation to which it is native, because it is supported not by intellect, but by emotion, as is best evidenced by the patriotism and loyalty which it has inculcated above all other virtues".¹ In Shinto lies the unity and the strength of the nation from that unity. The reason is that Shinto is emperor-centered. The traditions of the nation strengthened by historical circumstances have set the emperor in the position of veneration and in him, as the ruler, lies the unity of the nation and the continuation of Shinto.

To us Christians, this faith of Japan, Shinto, is a fundamental question of the First Commandment, Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. We know that all our fear, love and trust must be centered in God, not in man. A correct knowledge and trust in God must be fostered before Shinto will relinquish its hold on the hearts and salvation of the Japanese people. Buddhism has been called the creed of half of Japan, yet at the same time Shinto may be called the creed of all Japan.² This is an indication of the fact that these people, while holding to

1. Inazo Nitobe, Japan, p. 321.

2. D. C. Holtom, The National Faith of Japan, p. 5.

their Buddhist doctrine, or other faith, have adjusted these doctrines to their loyalty to the emperor. Tradition and social pressure have made the people make this adjustment. Only the emperor himself can release them from their gods to God. Subjectively speaking, therefore, the correction must come from the emperor himself. He must direct the loyalty that the people have to him to beyond himself and toward God.

Our thesis is: Shinto is the principle of the Japanese nation. It is manifested in the love of the people for the nation. As for the individual in his relationship to God, Shinto leaves the matter to each soul. But the two factors are so closely related that they militate against the successful introduction of Christianity.

Our study of Shinto will be, first of all, the consideration of the historical circumstances and influences in which Shinto developed. Then the traditional myths will be analyzed. Finally, the resulting State Shinto and the sectarian Shinto will be described.

The intention of the submitter of this thesis is conciseness rather than comprehensiveness. He apologizes for the neglect of particular points of interest to the reader because of this aim.

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I. THE HISTORY OF SHINTO AS A PART OF THE HISTORY OF JAPAN

The Pertinency of the Historical Study -

History as well as cultural influences from without the country determined greatly the primitive faith of the people. At several moments in the 2605 years of Japanese history through which Shinto has grown and survived, the word or intent of one man politically changed the religious situation in Japan. Emperor Kimmel found himself confronted by the question, should Buddhism be permitted in Japan. On the one hand was the Nakatomi clan, hereditary liturgists, and the Mononobe clan, who were entrusted with the protection of the palace and who were the leading military family, on the side of the upholders of the native Shinto. On the other hand, was the powerful Soga family, the highest civil official, who advocated the adoption of Buddhism by Japan.¹ The Emperor by not committing himself made it possible for Buddhism to establish itself and be the dominant faith for eight hundred years. Centuries later Tokugawa Iyeyasu, hoping to foster an alternative for the excess of martial zeal among the samurai, which was a serious treat to the stability of the civilian institutions, encouraged the development of scholarship, especially among these military classes. Japanese scholarship was directed almost exclusively

1. G. B. Sansom, Japan A Short Cultural History, p. 67.

to the study of the Confucian Classics. This in turn encouraged scholarship in native literature. Thus historical research carried the student back to the pre-Shogunal days and centered his attention upon the emperor as the fount and origin of all lawful political power. Shinto was again restored to the fore.²

Shinto is essentially a nature worship and originated in sacrifices performed in honor of the Kami.³ The Kami of nature were numerous. Besides the sun and moon, thunder and lightening, and similar great natural forces, also rivers, mountains, lakes, and even unusually large trees or peculiarly shaped rocks were worshiped. At an early date Shinto became complicated by the injection of ancestor worship. This added to the number of Kami deceased ancestors and ancient heroes, and it opened an avenue for a continued adding of Kami as history progressed. Ancestor worship, by most scholars, is said to have been imported from China.⁴ This importation occurred at the time of the introduction of Confucianism.

Keeping these two factors in mind, the original nature worship and the Chinese influence, we shall study the religious history of Japan and notice the development of Shinto.

2. G. Nye Steiger, A History of the Far East, pp. 574-77.

3. The spirits of various natural objects and forces. It is the word that is translated "god".

4. Sansom, op. cit., p. 55 and note p. 527, "Some Japanese scholars have challenged my statement that ancestor worship is a cult imported from China. On such a point positive evidence is lacking, but it is perhaps significant that in the poems of the Manyoshu ancestor worship is scarcely referred to, while what we know of early burial customs indicates a horror of death and pollution which seems to be inconsistent with worship of the dead".

1. Early History

The history of Japan officially begins at 660 B. C. with Emperor Jimmu.⁵ The date of the introduction of writing into the country is 405 A. D.⁶ But the earliest writings in existence are the Kojiki and the Nihongi from the early eighth century which are based partly upon oral tradition and partly upon older writings which have since been destroyed. It is during this period that the myths came into being which are the basis for the Shinto religion. The fact that there is no historical proof or writings from this early period make these myths possible and puts the myths in the realm of vagueness and mystery which is often connected with deities. These early writings betray the uncertainty of the myths, especially the Nihongi, which is a compilation of different versions of the myths.

These myths tell us that the gods Izanagi and Izanami created Japan from the drippings of the mud off of the spear which they had thrust down into the chaotic earth. Their off-springs were numerous. Among them was the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu-O-Mikami. Her Heavenly-Grandson was given this newly created land. His seventh descendent was the first emperor of Japan, Jimmu Tenno. The Nihongi continues with the history of the emperors until 720 A. D.⁷

5. Conservative scholars both Western and Japanese are agreed that the chronology of the Nihongi for several centuries prior to 405 A. D. shows a consistent error of a hundred and twenty years.

6. The introduction of writing was on the occasion when a Korean envoy in 391 A. D. was asked to recommend an instructor to the heir apparent of the Japanese Emperor. Wani, the recommended instructor, arrived in 405 A. D., from Paikoh. Sansom, op. cit. p. 36.

7. W. G. Aston, Nihongi, pp. 1-121.

From this early history we conclude that Shinto originated as the history of the Yamato people, just one of the several large clans of people then in Japan. The Yamato became the most powerful clan and eventually became the imperial clan. In support of this conclusion is the evidence of a writing from a century later than the Kojiki and the Nihongi (807 A. D.). The writing is the Kogoshui which is obviously written for the Imbe family in jealousy of a rival family and claiming a divine ancestor in the same high position as that of the divine imperial ancestress Amaterasu-no-O-Mikami.⁸

From archeological evidence and contemporaneous Chinese records we construct this history of ancient Japan. The Ainus are believed to be the original people on the main island, Honshu, and part of the southern island, Kyushu.⁹ They were gradually pushed north by a warlike people who seemed to have entered Kyushu. These newcomers are the ancestors of the Japanese people. As families grew into clans, a powerful clan, the Yamato, became prominent.¹⁰ This is the Yamato clan that fostered the ancient history of Japan which became the basis of Shinto. By the seventh century a central state was established by this clan at the eastern end of the Inland Sea. To strengthen their dynastic claims they had the Kojiki and Nihongi compiled from the early myths and legends which were placed together in such a way as to glorify the reigning family and their ancestors. Their claim based on these writings

8. Genchi Kato, Kogoshui, p. 4.

9. Steiger, op. cit., p. 213.

10. An ambassador of the Chinese Han emperor at Loyang records thirty-two provinces in the country. The ruler of each claimed the title of king but acknowledging some duty to the Yamato overlord. ibid. p. 215.

is that Jimmu Tenno,¹¹ the first human sovereign of the Empire, is the direct descendant of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu-O-Mikami, and these earliest writings are chronicles of this descent from the creation of Japan to this time.

For a period from 581 B. C. to 98 B. C. (circa A. D. to 218 A. D.)¹² the chronicles name eight emperors but mention little of importance. There are several contemporary Chinese and Korean references to Japan. The Han chronicles mention missions of embassies or messengers from Japan in 57 A. D. and 107 A. D., reporting of a woman ruler, Pimiku. This ruler "was old and unmarried, and had devoted herself to magic, by her skill in which she gained favour with the people, who made her their queen."¹³ It must be remembered that these Chinese contacts were with the island of Kyushu. Apart from similar reports of the customs and description of the parts of Japan, which may be exaggerated by the enthusiasm of the travelers, there is little indication of the religious status of the people.

The chronicles mention relations with Silla under the Emperor Suinin, 29 B. C. to 70 A. D. (249 A. D. to 280 A. D.). There is a curious legend of a prince from that country, a god in one version, bringing tribute in the shape of sacred swords, spear, jewels, and mirror. This is thought of as an indication of Korean influence upon

11. "Tenno" is the Japanese title, Emperor.

12. Sansom, *op. cit.*, p. 31. The first dates are those of the native chronicles. The dates in parentheses are based by Professor Kume on correspondence with events in Chinese and Korean history. But they are approximations. Most recent researches tend to put them all a decade or more later.

13. *ibid.*, p. 29.

early Shinto thru the Izumo people who were in contact with the Koreans.¹⁴

The next contact with Korea of noticable degree is the invasions of Korea under Empress Jingo in 200 A. D. Korean histories, too, record three Japanese attacks of increasing severity but all successfully repulsed. This is contrary to the Japanese account which states that the Korean monarchs were conquered and forced to do homage.¹⁵ The significance of these records is that there was a contact with Korea and probably small numbers of immigrants at various times had come by the way of the Korean kingdom of Paikche, who brought with them the culture of the continent of Asia.

A more significant event in Asiatic history is the collapse of the Chinese Han dynasty early in the third century. This caused a considerable number of Chinese to take refuge in Korea and in Japan because of political difficulties.¹⁶ This, too, meant the introduction of Confucianism into Japan. However, at this time there is no evidence that Confucianism or the use of Chinese ideographs had spread to the Japanese. One explanation given is that it was easier to employ a scribe than to learn the complicated ideographs. The technical difficulty is the tediousness of writing the agglutinated, polysyllabic Japanese by signs standing for monosyllabic words of Chinese. This would make writing voluminous and would add the difficulty of the dissimilar sounds in the Japanese and Chinese languages.¹⁷ With the

14. ibid., p. 32.

15. Steiger, op. cit., p. 218.

16. ibid., p. 219.

17. Sansom, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

date of the introduction of writing into the court, 405 A. D., there is more tangible evidence of Confucianism getting a start in Japan. The King of Paikche, according to Steiger, sent to the Japanese sovereign a present of two fine horses, whose attendant was an accomplished scholar able to read and explain the Confucian Classics. This scholarly keeper of horses was appointed tutor of the heir apparent and instructed him in the mysteries of the Chinese written character as well as in the social maxims of Confucianism.¹⁸ This meant the introduction of definite ethics into the thought patterns of the Japanese. Shinto itself never evolved a body of sacred writings, a peculiarity to which may be attributed the fact that Shinto never became an ethical religion except in the sects. But this factor, that no definite dogma was established, strengthened Shinto by making it possible for those who looked for definite ethical guidance to adopt Confucian teachings into their native faith and make for themselves a practical religion out of Shinto. At this time, Confucianism strengthened the imperial clan and its Kamd by putting the clan politically and culturally a step ahead of the other clans.

18. Steiger, op. cit., p. 220.

2. The Introduction and Dominance of Buddhism.

Through these various contacts with Korea and with Chinese culture, Buddhism undoubtedly reached Japan some time before its formal introduction. One instance occurred in 522 A. D. A Chinese monk arrived in Yamato by the way of Korea and erected a temple containing an enshrined image of Buddha. He attempted to spread Buddhist teachings among the people but apparently with no results.¹⁹

Not until thirty years later, 552 A. D., do we find record of Buddhism brought to the attention of the Yamato Government. At that time the king of Paikche was being threatened by a combined force of Koguryu and Silla and appealed to the Yamato ruler for military assistance. Along with this appeal he sent gifts, a gold-plated copper image of a Buddha and a number of volumes of Buddhist sutras. One account adds also a number of Buddhist monks along with men learned in divination, medicine, calendar-making and music.²⁰ The king of Paikche recommended the adoption of this new religion, which he said though hard to explain and hard to comprehend, was of all doctrines the most excellent, and brought the realisation of all desires.²¹ Kimmel Tenno avoided committing himself because two powerful factions were created on this issue. The Nakatomi clan, hereditary liturgists, and the Mononobe clan, who were entrusted with the protection of the palace and were the leading military family, objected that to worship foreign gods would only bring down on their heads the wrath of the national deities, which had been worshipped since the foundation of Japan.

19. ibid., p. 220.

20. Sansom, op. cit., p. 66.

21. ibid., p. 67.

However, the powerful head of the Soga family had become O-omi, Chief of Chieftains, and when the question was put to him, he sided with Buddhism. Thus Buddhism received official sanction and encouragement. Emperor Bidatsu, who succeeded Kimmei, did not accept Buddhism, but he was devoted to Chinese literature. At the same time Soga no Umako, son of Iname and the succeeding O-omi, followed his father as a patron of Buddhism. Buddhism received its start in Japan with some encouragement but the outlook continued to be poor in spite of Umako's business-like way of making the new religion a necessary feature in the rising nation.

We say that the growth of Buddhism was not an easy one because the political rivals of Soga took every opportunity to hinder it. Soon after the first imperial decision and permission, an epidemic of sickness began to rage and the Nakatomi and the Mononobe attributed it to the anger of the native gods toward Buddhism. The Emperor was swayed and the image was thrown into the canal at Naniwa. Under Bidatsu the Soga O-omi, Umako, continued. He found the only practising Buddhist, a former Korean monk, who had become a layman, and ordered him to resume his holy profession. A temple was annexed to Umako's own dwelling for the images to be enshrined. In 557 monks and ascetics, also a temple architect and a maker of images, came over from Paikche, bringing religious books. In 579 Silla also sent an image. But shortly after this another pestilence broke out. Again the rivals of Soga had their chance. The emperor was persuaded and the Mononobe and the Nakatomi had the pleasure of destroying Umako's holy edifices.²²

22. ibid., p. 69.

Yet, as the Soga family became powerful, Buddhism gained a firmer foothold. After a short but bloody civil war (587) the Soga gained the upper hand and Umako was paramount in Japan. They built temples. Monks, priests, nuns and workers were brought from Korea. Umako stopped at nothing to achieve his ends. He was responsible for the murder of many of his enemies, including two imperial princes and ultimately the emperor Sujun himself.

Finally, we find in the record of the next emperor, Yomei or better known by his posthumous title, Shotoku Taishi, that he "believed in the law of Buddha and revered the way of the gods."²³ It was the chief concern of Shotoku Taishi to propagate the moral and intellectual benefits of Buddhism. He not only fostered the outward forms of the religion, temples and ceremonies, but he appealed to the enlightenment offered by Buddhism. For this reason he is called the real founder of Buddhism in Japan,²⁴ the Constantine of Japanese Buddhism.²⁵ In 604 A. D. he issued a code which was a collection of moral injunctions addressed to the ruling classes and represented a turning point in the ideals of government. This "constitution" is remarkable, for it said absolutely nothing about the observance of Shinto rites or the worship of the Kami. On the contrary, it exhorted officials and people alike to reverence the Three Treasures of Buddhism - Buddha, the Law, and the Priesthood - in the second of the seventeen articles.²⁶ From this time until the Tokugawa

23. This is the first time that the native religion was referred to as Shinto, the Way of the Gods.

24. Sanson, op. cit., p. 71.

25. D. C. Holtom, The National Faith of Japan, p. 33.

26. Steiger, op. cit., p. 223.

Shogunate Buddhism submerged Shinto.

Nara Period (710 A. D. to 784 A. D.) - Buddhism was now in full power. Temples were erected. The Great Buddha was enshrined in The Great Hall which is without a parallel in Japan for size and magnificence.²⁷ The image of the seated figure was fifty-three feet high and contained over one million pounds of metal - copper, tin, and lead. This was the glory of Buddhism. Shinto was submerged and almost forgotten.

A certain reaction arose in favor of Shinto about the close of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth century. This reaction was for political reasons. The people had experienced four empresses under priestly influence in one century. As a result they came to think that female rulers were dangerous, especially at the death of the wayward Empress Shotoku who had made a monk, Dokyo, the Minister of State. The statesmen and nobles feared the growing political power of the priesthood. The reaction could not compete with Buddhism, but a number of observances and festivals which seem to have been neglected for some time were now revived. It is during this time that the Kojiki, 712 A. D., and the Nihongi, 720 A. D., were compiled. Also, in the records of the Nara period were frequent notices of the celebration of such ceremonies as the National Purification and the various rituals connected with harvest. But these are merely indications of the fact that Shinto tended more and more toward becoming an official cult, emphasizing the functions of the emperor as the intermediary between

27. Sansom, op. cit., p. 127. The Great Hall is still the largest wooden building under one roof in the world.

the people and the ancestral gods. The original, popular nature worship was being divorced from Shinto and was being replaced by Buddhism and Confucianism.²⁸ For seventy-four years Nara continued to be the capital of the empire and the center of its artistic, literary, and religious life. In 784 Emperor Kwammu transferred his government to Nagaoka and after a few years chose Kyoto as the capital in 794, for the purpose of diminishing the political influence of the numerous Buddhist institutions which had grown up around Nara.²⁹

Various sects have their beginning in this period. The first sect in the point of time is the Sanron sect, or school of the Three Treatises, introduced in 625 by a Korean monk, Ei-kwan. The Sanron doctrine represents the first serious attempts of the Japanese to study the nature of the universe. Next came the Hosso or Yuishiki sect, introduced in 650 by a Japanese student-monk named Dosho. Yuishiki means "only consciousness", denoting the doctrine that consciousness is the only reality. The Kusha sect stands for a realist philosophy. The Ritsu sect did not trouble much about doctrinal questions, but paid special attention to discipline and to correct spiritual succession. The last in this group of sects is the ritualistic Kegon sect.³⁰

Heian Period - The Chinese culture and religion continued its dominance. The ruling classes of people tended toward extravagant expenditures upon religious rites. An imperial edict had to be issued to set the limits to the amount of offerings which might be made to temples in payment for the Buddhist masses for the dead. An edict

28. ibid., p. 183.

29. Steiger, op. cit., p. 228.

30. Sansom, op. cit., pp. 118-125.

earlier in the same year, 807 A. D. indicated the corruption of the priesthood. "Priests, diviners and the like take advantage of the common people by wantonly interpreting good and evil omens. The people in their ignorance put faith in their predictions, so that gradually false cults come to flourish and evil magic to prosper. Such customs gather strength and impair simple habits. They are henceforth strictly forbidden and all persons studying these arts, or continuing to practise them, will be banished."³¹

Pure Shinto always retained a territory of its own, but the territory was shrunken at this time and restricted to the traditional sites connected with legendary antiquity. In times of need the imperial courts reverted to calling on the Shinto gods for help. As in 818, after a succession of bad harvests, all court officials were put on short rations and fasted with prayer for three days imploring better weather.³²

At the new capital Buddhist sects developed. In 807 Saicho instituted a chapter of monks who became known as the Tendai. Saicho, who is posthumously known as Dengyo Daishi, became the first to break away from the Nara traditions. He was the fore-runner of the men who developed a form of Buddhism of a progressively national character. A second powerful sect is the Shingon sect, founded by Kukai, or canonically known as Kobo Daishi. The Shingon sect distinguishes itself from the others by its liking for magic and symbolism. Baptism is also an important rite. Evidently Kukai's chief concern was to convert nobility to his doctrines. Saicho and Kukai are sometimes spoken of as the originators of Dual

31. ibid., pp. 188-89.

32. ibid., p. 189.

Shinto (Ryobu Shinto). Nothing in their writing prove this contention beyond the fact that perhaps they sometimes looked on the Shinto gods as bodhisattvas.³³ These sects became politically powerful. The Fujiwaras were in administrative power and eclipsed the emperor in actual authority. Emperor Sanjo II, however, in 1072, shrewdly abdicated the throne voluntarily in favor of his son and retired to a monastery, where he planned to direct the government of his successor from cloistered seclusion. Shirakawa, his son, and Toba, his great-grandson, followed his example and assumed cloistered dictatorship. For seventy years after the abdication of Shirakawa, the "cloistered court" had left to the Fujiwara officials of the imperial palace only the outward ceremonies of government. All important decisions were made by the ex-emperor and his monastic brethren.³⁴ Thus we find the religious organizations a power contralling Japan's administration.

Although these Buddhist sects tried their best to suppress Shinto and did succeed in transforming it to the mere rituals of worship, they could not destroy the ancient beliefs of the Japanese. The Shoku Nihongi,³⁵ under the date 787, records that an envoy was sent by the Court to Katano, to worship the Sovereign of Heaven before the tomb of a deceased emperor. Shinto survived in form at least.

33. *ibid.*, pp. 224-28.

34. Steiger, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-37.

35. Sansom, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-34, Shoku Nihongi covers the period 700 to 887, comprised of a 1000 volumes, covering the matters civil, administrative, ceremonial, and ecclesiastical, as well as medicine, poetry, genealogies and selections from Chinese learning and culture. Some venture to say that the taste for Chinese poetry at Court was almost madness.

During this period Buddhist sects submerged Shinto in the eyes of the people, but they made an impression upon the people which later became manifested in the numerous Shinto sects of the modern period. This period illustrates well that Shinto is in reality a form and that Shinto leaves spiritual and intellectual needs to be filled by the individual.

The characteristic of the Japanese of this period may be analysed as: no torture by a sense of sin, or desire to solve the problem of Good and Evil; no puritanical strain which would drive them to seek refuge in quietism or in escape by incessant activity. The people were impressionable and lively, but without metaphysical leanings.³⁶ They are ready for a type of evangelism which would afford an easy outlet for religious emotion for something satisfying but not exacting.

This attitude conditioned the people for the Jodo (Pure Land) sect. Jodo was founded by Genshin (942-1017). In doctrine Jodo is Amidistic, insisting upon faith as a means of salvation. Earlier Buddhism had maintained man's future depended upon his own deeds - "jiriki" (one's own strength). In contrast, this alteration of Buddhism was designated by the term, "tariki" (the strength of another). The believer who desires salvation has only to invoke the name of Amida Buddha in simple faith. The rule is: the believer shall put all his trust in the power of Amida and invoke repeatedly the sacred name, in the formula "Namu Amida Butsu" (Homage to Amida Buddha). The practice is called "nembutsu". All sects felt obliged to incorporate "nembutsu" in their creeds, since it was so simple and attractive to the people.

36. ibid., pp. 244-45.

Politically let us note one change. In 894 Michizane, ambassador to the T'ang court, petitioned the throne to stop sending embassies to China. His petition was granted. The people felt it best to be left to themselves to assimilate and adapt to their own needs and tastes the Chinese culture. This indicates the feeling of independence of the people.³⁷

Kamakura - The origin of this period is found in the eighth century when emperor Kwammu instituted the policy that the younger son of each sovereign, usually the sixth and succeeding sons, were reduced from imperial rank to the status of mere nobles and given family names. Four sons of Kwammu Tenno were given the name Taira. The Minamoto families descended from the sons of various later emperors.³⁸

The Minamoto clan had risen to power by virtue of its military strength. The center of administration was moved once more. This time to Kamakura in eastern Japan, near the modern Yokohama. There Minamoto no Yoritomo, the Sei-i-tai-shogun, established his Baku-fu, 1189.

During this period Buddhism grew as a popular religion. The reason given is that Buddhism tended to become national and take on a Japanese complex. Together with this factor was the reaction against the formal Buddhism of the Fujiwara. This reaction took three distinct forms: a revival of the old Nara sects, the birth of important new protestant sects, and the rise of the Zen sect.³⁹

Of interest is the development of the Jodo sect under Honen Shonin

37. ibid., p. 209.

38. Steiger, op. cit., p. 237.

39. Sansom, op. cit., p. 327.

(1113-1212). Through the adoption of "nembutsu", salvation was now open to the common man. Some of the world-weary samurai went a step beyond Honen and sought to hasten their entry in Paradise by suicide. More significant are the separatistic movements created by the persecution of Jodo. Under Shinran a modified Jodo sect, the Jodo Shinshu, was founded. Shinran pushed the theory of "nembutsu" to a logical extreme, arguing that one sincere invocation of Amida was sufficient to ensure salvation. Therefore, since Paradise was certain, there was no need for man to devote himself to religious practices or bother his head with abstrast teachings. What he should do rather is live an ordinary life, as a parent and as a member of society, following the ordinary lay rules of good behavior. Priests need not be set apart by their dress or by their way of living. Thus we find in the Jodo sects the first sect which is congregational in type.⁴⁰

A second popular sect of that day was the Hokke or Lotus Sect, founded by Nichiren (1222-1262). It was a protest against established forms of faith and strongly national in its aims. Nichiren was of an ambitious and vehement nature, and the sect took on the attitude of denouncing everything. His simple formula was the utterance of "Namu-Myoho-Renge-Kyo".⁴¹

The Zen Sect again was a radical change from the other Buddhist sects. Zen is derived, thru Chinese, from the Sanskrit dhyana, meaning meditation. It has no elaborate philosophy nor does it depend upon scriptures. Zen had an appeal to the soldier who is self-reliant and

40. ibid., pp. 330-31.

41. ibid., pp. 332-36.

cared little for the emotionalism of Jodo, and who had little patience with the metaphysical subtleties of other schools. "Satori" (sudden enlightenment) is the intimate personal experience at which the Zen adherent aims. Zen was practical and immediate, without abstractions, and it inculcated calmness and self-reliance. It left room for a simple, practical code of social ethics which found favor with the samurai. This developed into an insistence upon rigorous self-discipline and introspection which suited the temper and ideals of the feudal warrior.⁴²

During this period religion was subsidiary, not a primary, motive of the conduct of the military class. Its use was oft times limited to oaths of fealty and to legal bonds when the gods were called upon to punish a breach of faith. Religion was brought to the fore only in times of peril when all the Buddhist and Shinto deities were invoked, through prayer, for strength or for victory in battle.⁴³ The Mongolian invasions (1274-1281) should be mentioned here because at that time the Shinto deities were also invoked along with the others. The successful repulsion of Kublai Khan is often pointed to by present Shintoists as a proof that the Shinto deities are the protecting, national deities.

Muromachi (Ashikaga Shoguns) 1338-1583 - Through out the empire the warrior is supreme. The Ashikaga Shogunate differed decidedly from the Kamakura period. Briefly described, the period is marked by extreme luxury at the capital and by almost unbroken civil disorder in the provinces.

During this time the Zen sect had the favor of the samurai, and

42. ibid., pp. 336-39

43. ibid., p. 290.

consequently they were the powerful influence religiously. Sansom ventures to say that Zen was the "official if not the state religion".⁴⁴ In this Zen sect and its teachings we find the source of much in the present day thought patterns of the people. Muso Kokushi was the leading monk at this time. He wielded a great influence upon many prominent feudal warriors, including Ashikaga Takauji, the Shogun.

Shinto survived, although it was overshadowed by Buddhism. It even prospered in the dual forms, Ryobu, which is a compromise with Buddhist tenets. The neglect of Shinto was caused by the first enthusiasm for Buddhism at the court. Later the neglect was continued by sheer poverty. During this time, many Shinto shrines assumed an extremely Buddhist complexion. Yuitsu is the name of a new school of Shinto which was highly syncretic. In this sect we can see an indication of the beginning of a Shinto revival, although it was years before it seriously threatened Buddhism. One factor which began turning the tide was the poverty of the throne. This poverty caused a number of the old aristocracy to lament its lost dignity and to look backward to their former glory. Among common people there was a gain toward Shinto. Since the imperial wealth was gone, the priests looked to other sources of income. They borrowed the Buddhist system of religious associations (Ko) by which the people were affiliated to the shrine of the Sun Goddess. The members of the associations were encouraged to make pilgrimages to Ise. There the cult lost its aristocratic exclusive character and became popular. In time most Japanese came to feel that they ought to journey to Ise for worship at least once in their lifetime. Another boost toward

44. ibid., p. 369.

popular worship was the sale of calendars, which were formerly prepared especially for the court but now were written in a simple script for popular use. They brought the national shrine more constantly before the eyes of the populace.⁴⁵

Sengoku Jidai - This is a short period in which the country is at war - from the close of the 15th to the close of the 16th century.

Religiously, we find a negative assistance of Shinto by the men in power. Both Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi suppressed the Buddhist sects. Nobunaga, in particular, concentrated his efforts upon subduing the Buddhist church. The reasons were purely political, because the Buddhist church was powerful enough to threaten the secular powers.

A passing note: During this period Frances Xavier began the efforts of introducing Christianity into Japan, 1549-51.

45. ibid., p. 377.

3. Shinto Revived and Established

Yedo (Tokugawa Shogunate) - This is the beginning of the Period of Exclusion and extended peace, 1637 A. D., The Exclusion was enforced not because the Japanese government disapproved the doctrines of Christianity, but because it feared the ambitious designs of the countries from which the missionaries had come. It felt that the Japanese Christians might prove disloyal to their native land in case of an attempted Spanish invasion.⁴⁶ The Shimabara revolt in 1637 was the culmination of the brief Christian flourishing.

Aside from this disturbance which was very small in extent nationally since the Christians were so few, the era of the Tokugawas was peaceful. Iyeyasu realized that the unused martial zeal of the samurai was threat to this peace. He emphasized the cultivation of scholarship by the military men and the court nobles. The later shoguns continued to encourage the development of scholarship. Thus Japanese scholarship was directed almost exclusively to the presumably safe study of the Confucian Classics. The immediate effect of the revival of Confucian learning was decidedly beneficial to the new regime. But as a part of this revival historical research was developed. Historical study in turn carried the student back to the pre-Shogunal days and disclosed to him that the emperor was the source of all lawful political power. By the end of the 17th century a few daring scholars were beginning to assert that the Shogun was nothing more than a creation of the emperor, who could revoke at any time the powers which he had granted.⁴⁷

46. Steiger, op. cit., p. 417.

47. ibid., pp. 574-76.

Another change brought about by the revival of Confucian scholarship is the almost complete overshadowing of Buddhism as a positive force in the life of the Japanese people. Iyemitsu did decree that every daimyo should enroll himself and his people as adherents of some recognized Buddhist sect, but actually such activities were only outward appearances. Buddhism seemed to vanish from the historical scene. There was no sign of any activity in religious literature nor of any cultural contribution from the church.⁴⁸

An interesting item is that the Confucian scholars let their hair grow long while prior to this time learning had been associated with the church, and scholars had shaved their heads like priests. This is significant because now Confucian studies were no longer the recreation of learned monks.⁴⁹

The official philosophy in the early Tokugawa period was that of Chu Hsi. Hayashi Razan was its chief exponent and at the same time an advisor to the government.⁵⁰

Ethical codes are not enough to satisfy the spiritual life of a people for any extended period of time. God cannot be left out of life. When Buddhism declined a spiritual vacuum was created. This vacuum was filled by a reviving of interest in the ancient, but long neglected, cult of Shinto. At first Confucianism had fostered the revival through classical studies and also by a contemptuous attitude toward the spiritual

48. Sansom, op. cit., p. 477.

49. ibid., p. 501.

50. ibid., p. 501.

teachings of Buddha, but the Shinto revival eventually developed into a reaction against Confucianism itself. Because of its nationalistic character, Shinto regarded the Chinese sage as a foreigner.

Politically, the Shinto renaissance focused attention upon the divine ancestry of the imperial family. We have the words of Motoori Norinaga at the end of the 18th century.

The Mikado is the sovereign appointed by the deities who created this country. The Sun-Goddess never said "Disobey the Mikado if he be bad," and therefore, whether he be good or bad, no one attempts to deprive him of his authority. He is the Immovable Ruler who must endure to the end of time so long as the sun and moon continue. In ancient language the Mikado was called a god, and that is his real character. Duty, therefore, consists in obeying him implicitly without questioning his acts.⁵¹

Two generations later the Shogunate collapsed.

One of the conspicuous features in the morality of this period is that it was a class morality, a group morality. This morality was a sense of responsibility of an individual toward the group or class to which he belonged. It was more important to him what the group thought of him than what he himself deemed correct or right. An example of the application of this is found in the commercial class. There were certain prescribed obligations between employer and servant, or master and apprentice. Individualism was discouraged. This morality was approved by all the philosophers in spite of the fact that they differed among themselves on points of political theory.⁵² This is a conditioning, we might say, to making State Shinto, as it is today, the creed of all Japan and not a matter of individual preference.

51. Steiger, op. cit., p. 577.

52. Sansom, op. cit., p. 509.

Meiji and Modern Era. 1868-

1868 marks the beginning of an era in which Japan became a modern nation. All the outstanding men of the Meiji era were "samurai". They restored the emperor to power as the head of the nation. These men deliberately established a Japanese state based on the unification of government and religion. The term used to describe this close relationship is "Saisei Itchi". An imperial edict of 1868 defines this national psychology of safeguarding against the dangers of foreign contacts and of unifying in the support of vital national polity.⁵³

Because of this, Buddhism suffered. The men who were instrumental in forming the new government were deeply dyed in the doctrine of Haibutsu-ron, "Down with Buddhism." A union of Shinto and Buddhism was strictly prohibited. The imperial family was barred from continuing in Buddhist orders or ceremonies. The Buddhists were persecuted severely by this blind fury of "patriotism." However, this persecution lasted only a few years (1867-72).⁵⁴

In February 1899, the national government issued a written constitution containing a guarantee of full religious freedom.⁵⁵

In August the famous Order Number Twelve was issued prohibiting religious instruction in all schools - governmental and private.⁵⁶

Prior to this, in 1882, Shinto was defined more definitely by the imperial government. A classifying of State Shinto and sectarian Shinto occurred. These latter Shinto bodies were to be separated from

53. D. C. Holtom, Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism, p. 5.

54. ibid., p. 127.

55. D. C. Holtom, The National Faith of Japan, p. 70 f.

56. Holtom, Modern Japan, p. 76.

direct relationship with the state and were made to depend upon private initiative for organization and support.⁵⁷

In 1900 the Bureau of Shrines and Temples was abolished and in its place two separate offices were created, the Bureau of Shinto Shrines and the Bureau of Religion. The Bureau of Shinto Shrines was given charge of all affairs concerning official shrines and their priests. The Bureau of Religions was given the oversight of all matters classified by the government as religious. This bureau had jurisdiction over the various sects of Shinto and of Buddhism and also of all Christian denominations. In 1913, the Bureau of Religions was transferred to the Department of Education from the Department of Home Affairs.⁵⁸

All seems well in the separation of State Shinto from "all" other religious bodies, and religious freedom appeared to be maintained. In 1911, however, a perplexing "Naikun" (unofficial instructions) appeared from Mr. Eitaro Komatsubara, Minister of Education. The orders were that school teachers should conduct their pupils in a body to local shrines and there do obeisance before the altars.⁵⁹ In justifying this order the analogy is drawn of American respect for the Lincoln Memorial or the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. No record can be found of the original Naikun.

Another statement worth noticing was issued in the autumn of 1935. The new statement encourages religious education in the homes and through various religious organizations, while school education is declared to be neutral as far as sectarianism is concerned. Some feel

57. Holtom, National Faith, p. 67f.

58. ibid., p. 70.

59. ibid., p. 73.

this to be amount to practically a reversal of Order Number Twelve of 1889.⁶⁰

During the Meiji Era almost all of the Shinto sects began and grew. They developed into thirteen sects. In these sects can be seen the various influences of Japan's long history, including both Confucian and Buddhist influences.

60. Holton, Modern Japan, p. 85.

Summary.

The people of Japan do love their country. The history shows us that Shinto was a gradual development and only arrived at its present form in the Meiji era. Ancient history provided the first tenets by its myths and legendary character. The long period of Buddhist domination established its form of being a ritual and a series of ceremonies. Shinto proved that it could survive. At the same time, Shinto showed its flexibility. Except for Christianity it could incorporate the teachings of other systems because it itself lacks a system for the soul. Finally, in the last period, Shinto laid down definite distinctions to meet the requirements of the modern world.

Two points are apparent through out the history of Shinto. It asks only one thing of its people: that the imperial family be held as having the divine right to rule. The people have given Shinto this request unquestioningly because of love for their country. The other point is that Shinto neither offers nor demands anything of the individual soul. It leaves that to the individual to satisfy as long as it is in keeping with the one doctrine which Shinto does demand.

II. AN ANALYSIS OF THE ANCIENT SHINTO MYTHS.

Shinto has no writing comparable to Holy Scriptures. Writing was not introduced into Japan until 405 A. D. and for centuries after this date all writing was done by imported Chinese scribes. One of the two oldest writings, the Nihongi, was written in Chinese three centuries later. Oral transmission of facts has consistently proved itself to be unreliable. Thus the details of events in early Japanese history are classified as legendary and by the written records which we have extant today, much of this history is obviously mythology. Upon these legends and myths Shinto has built its theology.

A brief description of the sources available for the study of Ancient Shinto:

Principle Sources:

Kojiki (Records of Ancient Matters) was compiled by imperial order and completed in 712 A. D. The preface states that it was taken down from the lips of Hiyeda no Are, who had so wonderful a memory that he could repeat with his mouth whatever was placed before his eyes and record in his heart whatever struck his ears. An accurate translation was made by B. H. Chamberlain which can be found in the Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan of 1882.

Nihongi (Chronicles of Japan) is also an official compilation, made in 720 A. D. It is not quite as full as the Kojiki. Its disadvantage is that it is composed in the Chinese language. But of interest is the fact that the author or some nearly contemporary writer has added to the original text a number of variants of the current myths, and thus enabling us to correct any impression of

uniformity or consistency which might be left by the perusal of the Kojiki and Nihongi alone, showing a large body of irreconcilable mythical material, which these works are attempts to harmonize. There is a translation by Aston, to be found in the Transactions of the Japan Society, 1896.

Supplementary Sources:

Idzumo Fudoki is a topography of the province of Idzumo, compiled about 733 A. D. It contains a few mythical passages.

Kogoshiui, 807 A. D., adds very little to the Kojiki and the Nihongi. It is written biased to the Imbe family.

Shojiroku, 815, is a sort of peerage of Japan. It records the descent of many of the noble families which are traced from the Deities of the Shinto Pantheon.

Engishiki (Institutes of the Period Yengi), 901-923, is the principal source of information for the ceremonial of Shinto. It contains a minute description of the official ritual as it was then practised, together with twenty-seven of the principal prayers used in worship. These are the first prayers reduced to writing but many of them are of substance several hundreds of years older. Some were translated by Sir Ernest Sato for the Asiatic Society of Japan, 1879-81.

Modern Studies:

There are the writings of the scholars Motoori and Hirata and others during the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth.

Fuzoku Gwaho is a modern illustrated magazine, which is a rich store of information in respect to modern Shinto and the folk-lore

and superstitions which are associated with it.¹

Some Preliminary Remarks:

This analysis is limited to ancient Shinto or as some name it, Pure Shinto - the Shinto of the Kojiki, Nihongi and Engishiki.

The purpose of this analysis is to show that ancient Shinto is merely a skeleton into which the individual or groups of people may put systems or tenets for the satisfaction of their souls. The basic concern of the soul is: who is god and what are his attributes? together with, how does god regard us and what must we do for him.

Therefore the analysis is divided into the two divisions: God and Man.

The material for this analysis, unless otherwise noted, is based on the material in the analysis of Shinto by Dr. Genchi Kato, formerly professor of Shinto in the Imperial University of Tokyo and now on the staff of the Shinto College (Kokugakuin Daigaku). Dr. Kato is the best-known interpreter of the modern Shinto revival. The material is taken from his book, "A Study of Shinto, The Religion of the Japanese Nation."

1. W. G. Aston, Shinto The Way of the Gods, pp. 2-4

A. GOD

1. God defined

a. Etymology - Kami is the word used most commonly for god. In a recent dictionary the following definition is given of this word:

Kami: 1. Something which has no form but is only spirit, has unlimited supernatural power, dispenses calamity and good fortune, punishes crime and rewards virtue. 2. Sovereigns of all times, wise and virtuous men, valorous and heroic persons whose spirits are prayed to after their death. 3. Divine things which transcend human intellect. 4. The Christian God, Creator, Supreme God.²

Aston, in his book "Shinto the Way of the Gods" has an interesting but confusing study of the word, kami. Apparently he had merely considered the word phonetically. The word, Kami, as we are studying it is written 神. Aston enumerates other uses of the word. Kami: 1. with the general meaning of "above", "superior". His illustration is Kawa-kami, meaning the upper waters of a river, but the ideograph used for this designation is 上; 2. hair of the head, written 髪; 3. "lord" in territorial titles, heads of state departments, written 守; 4. the upper part of the human body, namely, the head, is also the most important and honorable. A Japanese raises to his head a present or other object which he wishes to show respect.³ The conclusions made are that the word, Kami, generally means "upper" and secondarily used of god or men.

A note of interest is the Ainu Kamui which is used as a comparison.

2. Sanseido, New Japanese-English Dictionary, p. 342.

3. Aston, op. cit., p. 7f.

The Ainu respect their gods, Kamui, because the Kamui are possessed of various miraculous kinds of power with which men are not endowed. Men ask them for help in case of need. As for men they often have more treasures and wisdom than gods. Wise men make themselves prosperous by cajoling gods into compliance with flattering words. Animals, birds, insects and fish are gods in disguise.⁵ The Ainu Kamui in several respects arouses curiosity by its similarity to the Shinto Kami.

The classical definition of Kami in Japanese literature was given by the great eighteenth century scholar, Motoori Nirinaga. He writes,

I do not yet understand the meaning of the term, Kami. Speaking in general, however, it may be said that Kami signifies, in the first place, the deities of heaven and earth that appear in the ancient records and also the spirits of the shrines where they are worshipped.

It is hardly necessary to say that it includes human beings. It also includes such objects as birds, beasts, trees, plants, seas, mountains and so forth. In ancient usage, anything whatsoever which was outside the ordinary, which possessed superior power or which was awe-inspiring was called Kami. Eminence here does not refer merely to the superiority of nobility, goodness or meritorious deeds. Evil and mysterious things, if they are extraordinary and dreadful, are called Kami. It is needless to say that among human beings who are called Kami the successive generations of sacred emperors are all included. The fact that emperors are also called "distant Kami" is because, from the standpoint of common people, they are far-separated, majestic and worthy of reverence. In a lesser degree we find, in the present as well as in ancient times, human beings who are Kami. Although they may not be accepted throughout the whole country, yet in each province, each village and each family there are human beings who are Kami, each one according to his own proper position. The Kami of the divine age were for the most part human beings of that time and, because the people of that time were all Kami, it is called the Age of the Gods.

5. Kindaiti Kyosuke, Ainu Life and Legends, p. 49.

Furthermore, among things which are not human, the thunder is always called "sounding-Kami." Such things as dragons, the echo, and foxes, inasmuch as they are conspicuous, wonderful and awe-inspiring, are also Kami. In popular usage the echo is said to be Tengu and in Chinese writings it is referred to as a mountain goblin

In the Nihongi and the Manyoshu the tiger and the wolf are also spoken of as Kami. Again there are the cases in which peaches were given the name, August-thing-great-kamu-fruit, and a necklace was called August-storehouse-shelf-Kami. There are again numerous places in which seas and mountains are called Kami. This does not have reference to the spirit of the mountain or the sea, but Kami is used here directly of the particular mountain or sea. This is because they were exceedingly awe-inspiring.⁶

To substantiate this analysis for ourselves with more modern study, we turn to Dr. Kato's classifications of the Shinto gods.

b. Classification of Deities:

1. Nature Worship:

Sun - Amaterasu-Omikami or the Heaven-shining-great-august-deity, otherwise called Ohirumemuchi-no-Kami or the female possessor of the great sun. On the one hand, the sun itself was divine; on the other, the sun was humanized.

Star - Amatsu-Mikahoshi, the August-star of heaven, otherwise Amatsu-Kagaseo, the Brilliant Male.

Mountain - Oyamatsumi-no-Kami is the God or Spirit of the mountain. As early as the reign of Keiko-Tenno, the Emperor, observing the sublime beauty of high mountain ranges in a certain district of Kyushu, asked if there dwelt a deity in the mountains and one of his followers answered that there was a goddess called Yamatsuhime in the mountains.

6. Aston, National Faith, p. 23f.

Earthquake - In the period of the Empress-Regent Suiko (599), the Government authorities ordered the people to worship the Deity of the Earthquake.

Tree - Kikunochi, the Master or Spirit of Trees.

Serpent - In the Hitoachifudoki or Ancient Topography of Hitachi Province, compiled in the 6th year of Wado (713) in the reign of the Empress Gemmyo, there are mentioned mountain deities that are nothing but the veritable serpents of the locality. Susa-o-no-Mikoto killed the great monster serpent that made its appearance and devoured a young maiden offered to it as a human sacrifice each year, according to the Nihongi.

Wolf - Okuchi-no-Kami or Deity with Wide-Open Mouth.

Others are: Hare and the white boar, Kojiki; White deer, Nihongi; Silkworm or a louse, Osumifudoki or Ancient Topography of Osumi Province; Crow, Yatagarasu or Eight-hand-span Crow; Crocodile, Kojiki.⁷

2. Fetishism:

Sword - Kusanagi Sword was extracted by Susa-o-no-Mikoto from the tail of the monster serpent in Izumo Province, with which the Imperial Prince Yamato-takeru-no-Mikoto mowed grass in the plain of Yaizu, Suruga Province, and thereby, thanks to the miraculous virtue of the divine sword, made a narrow escape from being burnt to death by the treacherous Ainu enemy. Since the eastern expedition of Prince Yamato-Takeru as early as the reign of the Emperor Keiko, the Kusanagi Sword, one of the Three Divine Imperial Regalia, has been enshrined at Atsuta, in Owari Province, as a deity under the charge of Shinto

7. Genchi Kato, A Study of Shinto, the Religion of the Japanese nation, pp. 13-18.

priests there. In the reign of the Emperor Tenchi (623-668), when Dogyo, a Buddhist priest of Shiragi (Silla), attempted in vain to steal the divine Kusanagi Sword, intending to make off with it to his native Korea, the miraculous virtue of the Sword prevented the would-be thief from accomplishing his sacrilegious purpose. A curse by the Kusanagi Sword brought disease to the Emperor Temmu in 686, so diviners declared, and Emperor was thereupon constrained to return the Sword to its shrine at Atsuta in Owari, whence it had been removed.

Mirror - Yata-no-Kagami or Divine Mirror, one of the Three Divine Imperial Regalia. In the reign of the Emperor Yuryaku, the Divine Mirror of the Ise Shrine, according to the tradition of the Nihongi, was concealed in the ground at a certain spot on the banks of the sacred Isuzu River by the Imperial Guardian Priestess of the Mirror, Princess Takuhata by name, at her suicidal death. A miraculous rainbow made its appearance, indicating the very spot where the Mirror was buried. It is quite natural that according to the Kojiki, that Amaterasu-Omikami gave the Mirror to her grandson on his descent to earth and ordered him to regard the Mirror as her august soul or spirit and worship it as he was wont to worship her in Heaven.

Jewels - The jewels that Watatsumi-no-Kami or Sea God presented to his heavenly guest and son-in-law, Hikohohodemi-no-Mikoto, in the Royal Dragon Palace, are endowed with supernatural virtues. The Tide-flowing and Tide-ebbing Jewels are nothing but charms and talismans. By shaking them, the possessor of the Jewels can control at pleasure the rise or fall of the tide of the sea.⁸

8. Kato, op. cit., pp. 23-26.

3. Spiritism.

According to some of the old historical books it is reported that there was belief in four kinds of souls or spirits: the Nigimitama or gentle spirit, the Aramitama or rough spirit, the Sakimitama or Luck-spirit, and Kushimitama or wondrous spirit.

In their conception of the nature of the soul or spirit, the ancient Japanese ideas were crude and to a great extent materialistic.

Hara - belly, e.g., "to keep quiet her belly or rather womb."

By binding two stones endowed with magic virtues around the body of the Empress Jingo the men hoped that they might miraculously prevent her from giving birth to a child during her expedition to Korea.

Mirror - The mirror is not a mere emblem of the soul or spirit but is itself a man's soul or spirit. Therefore the Sun Goddess, when conferring the Divine Mirror upon her Grandson, said that always when he gazed upon this sacred treasure he would behold in it her divine self, and he must therefore reverently worship it.

Vapor or smoke - The old legend of Urashima tells us that when, on his return to earth, Urashima opened the Casket of Longevity presented him by the beautiful princess of the Dragon King under the sea, something like white cloud or vapor or breath, which was no other than the essence of his life, flew off high in the sky and all of a sudden the youthful Urashima became old and decrepit, and at last passed away.

Other forms of spirits are: light, shadow, sword, wind, shooting star or meteor, white bird and serpent.⁹

9. ibid., p. 32-37.

4. Ancestor Worship in ancient Japan.

At the time of Jimmu Tenno - Ame-no-Tomi-no-Mikoto, ancestor of the Imbe family, built a shrine - the present Awa Jinja - in commemoration of his ancestor Ame-no-Futotama-no-Mikoto, in Boshu, in order to worship his Ancestral Deity there. Ame-no-Tomi-no-Mikoto and his family did this before they settled in Boshu, when they came in migration from Awa in Shikoku.

In the Engi Period - According to the Engishiki, we find the Kokuso-Jinja of Aso, a shrine dedicated to a local lord of Aso Province. According to the Kojiki, in the reign of the Emperor Sujin, Hayamikatama-no-Mikoto, great-grandson of the Emperor Jimmu, was appointed the first local lord of Aso Province.

In the reign of the Emperor Keiko - Mutsukari-no-Mikoto, one of the Imperial princes of Keiko-Tenno, died. At the death of the beloved Imperial Prince, in commemoration of his meritorious services in cookery to the Emperor, His Majesty built a shrine in the Imperial Palace and dedicated it to the Prince, who became a tutelary god of the Imperial Cookery.

These three instances of ancestor worship occurred before the Korean expedition of the Empress Jingo, after which Chinese influences were to have been imported into Japan.¹⁰

10. ibid., p. 55ff.

2. Attributes of the Shinto Gods.

In this study of the attributes of the Shinto gods, the true God of the Bible is taken as the standard and comparison. As was expected much of the analysis is negative. For Christians such a study affirms their trust and elevate their joy that their God is certainly the Lord of heaven and earth.

Eternal? According to the Kogoshui, when Otokonushi-no-Kami, the God of Land, saw that the rice plants in his fields began prematurely to die, he was greatly dismayed and listened to the warning of certain diviners. Izanami was burnt to death when she was delivered of fire or the God of Fire, Kagutsuchi. Amewakahiko (the heavenly messenger to Izumo), Ukemochi-no-Kami (the Goddess of Food) and Wakahirume-no Mikoto (the Morning or Spring Sun-Goddess) died, being killed by their opponents. We do not hear reference in modern Shinto literature to the fact that these deities are in existence at the present moment. The references are all in the light that these deities are of ancient times, long since dead.

Omnipotent? In the Nihongi is recorded an account of the creation of Japan but not of the earth or the heavens. We quote from Aston's translation of the Nihongi:

It is said that when the world began to be created, the soil of which lands were composed floated about in a manner which might be compared to the floating of a fish sporting on the surface of the water. . . .

Izanagi no Mikoto and Izanami no Mikoto stood on the floating bridge of Heaven, and held council together, saying: "Is there not a country beneath?"

Thereupon they thrust down the Jewel-Spear of Heaven,

and groping about therewith found the ocean. The brine which dripped from the point of the spear coagulated and became an island which received the name of Ono-goro-jima. The Deities thereupon descended and dwelt in this island. Accordingly they wished to become husband and wife together, and to produce countries.¹¹

Although the deities Izanagi and Izanami did not create from nothing, they apparently had power to change existing matter into other forms. Much of their power was restricted to natural methods. In later history we find an account of power over nature being attributed to the gods. The occasion was the Mongol invasion in the 13th century. A gale of divine wind sent from the Ise Shrine overtook the enemy's fleet off the coast of Kyushu and scattered it, the result being destruction of nearly all the hostile ships. This happened according to the people's faith, because the National Guardian Goddess Amaterasu-Omikami in response to the earnest prayer of the Emperor Kameyama for divine help sent a cataclysm upon the enemy. Tradition has it that out of tens of thousands of Mongols only three men escaped the peril of the deep. The Shinto gods have an amount of power, although omnipotence cannot be attributed to them.

Omniscient? The Divine Couple Izanagi and Izanami are completely human and limited in knowledge. They did not know how to act in coition, when they entered in conjugal relations, until the wagtail suggested it to them. The Sun Goddess Amaterasu-Omikami is also quite human. She was enticed to come out of the Rock-cave again, being allured by the pleasing words and the bright mirror. Omniscience would not permit being deceived.

11. W. G. Aston, Nihongi, p. 2 and 10-12.

Omnipresent? The instance of Amaterasu-Omikami entering the Rock-cave and withdrawing with her the sunlight indicates the finiteness of her person. All of the deities in the myths are finite and restricted to bodily presence.

Holy? Izanagi and Izanami gave birth to an imperfect child. Hiruko, the leech child, was born to them, who at the age of three could not walk by itself. The child is imperfect, because the parents are not perfect. The hidden cause of the birth of an imperfect child is incomprehensible even to the Divine parents, so they inquire of the Heavenly Deities about the matter and resorted to the means of grand divination to ascertain the true cause.

Just? Susa-no-o-no-Mikoto obviously was malecious toward his sister Amaterasu-Omikami. He broke down the division between the rice-fields belonging to his sister. He let loose in them the Piebald Colt of Heaven. He committed nuisances in the hall where she was celebrating the solemn festival of first-fruits. The climax of his misdeeds was to fling the hide of the piebald colt into the sacred weaving-hall where the Sun Goddess was engaged in weaving the garments of the deities.

Gracious? When the Empress Jingo prayed to the deities for victory over Korea, the deities revealed their will thus, "If you present us with a ship and rice fields for an offering, or rather a bribe, literally speaking, we will bestow a rich country upon you." When the Emperor Ingyo got no game hunting all day long in the island of Awaji, divination revealed that it was by the divine will of Izanagi that game in the island was unobtainable and the same God disclosed his will, saying, "If you obtain a beautiful pearl from the bottom of the Sea

of Akashi and send it to me as an offering. I shall in return let you have much game." Being gracious and merciful has as an underlying motive of showing undeserved kindness and quite contrary to demanding returns or bribes.¹²

From this scant analysis of the mythological deities, we conclude that they are far from being regarded as absolute and perfect. Extra-ordinary perhaps is the more fitting description than divine.

12. Kato, op. cit., p. 81-89

B. MAN

1. Sin

a. The Nature of Sin.

In the ancient Shinto documents, such as the Kojiki, the Nihongi, the Norito, and the Kogoshui, the idea of sin is still, in nature, more physical than moral. The Heavenly and Earthly Offences enumerated in the old Norito or Shinto Rituals in the Engishiki are mostly physical in nature. The Heavenly Offences are those of breaking down the divisions of the rice fields, filling up the irrigating channels, opening the flood gate of the sluices, sowing seed over again, erecting rods in the rice fields, flaying animals alive or backwards, spreading excrement over the doors. The Earthly Offences are wound-defilement, corpse defilement, lepers, warts or corns or bunions, incest, bestiality, calamity through crawling worms or grubs, calamity sent by the Thunder-God on high, calamity through birds in the air, destruction of other people's domestic animals, and magical incantations.

b. Manifestations of Sin.

Impurity - The idea of purity and impurity is merely physical. In ancient Shinto documents purity meant ritual purity; and impurity, uncleanness or pollution, is, as a rule, of a physical nature. For instance, when Izanagi returned from his visit to the land of Death, he did not lose any time before purifying himself with water by plunging into the stream of a small river. As death is a pollution, Ajisuki-Takahikone-no-Kami was offended at being mistaken for a dead friend, Amewakahiko.

Sickness - Particularly pestilence, to the people of ancient Japan, was a calamity inflicted upon them thru evil influences or unseen powers.

It was imagined as being sent by the Evil Deity, Omagatsumi. They must ward off the evil deities of sickness, therefore they had the Michiaematsuri or Festival of the Road Deities. These Road Deities really are nothing but the evil deities of pestilence, whom people wish to prevent from entering the capital. Such bad influences from the evil deities must be gotten rid of. It has become customary that small dolls in paper or in metal are made, and, carrying people's sins committed daily, they are thrown adrift into a river or sea. These dolls are called an agamono or ransom. In 706 (the 3rd year of Keiun) an epidemic disease raged, for which deaths were countless, so that a great ceremony of exorcism was held for the first time at the capital of Kyoto.

Morality - Ancient Shinto has no morality to speak of; even the idea of purity is mostly ritualistic and physical. Yet the germ of ethical religion is not quite lacking in ancient Shinto. Besides its prohibition of incest and bestiality, it has two kinds of ordeal which could not have arisen with an entire absence of the idea or at least without a presentiment of moral order in the world. The two kinds of ordeal are by boiling liquid and by fire. It is recorded that the first case of ordeal took place in the reign of the Emperor Ingyo, when His Majesty ordered the rectification of falsities or corruptions of heraldry in family traditions by having the person concerned plunge his hand into a caldron of boiling water placed on the Amakashi Hill, and then call on his deities to witness.¹³

c. Result of Sin - Death.

Conception of Death - When a man's soul leaves his body, death

13. ibid., p. 112-15.

follows, so the ancient Japanese believed. Therefore at the death of Amewakahiko, his relatives and friends "disported themselves for eight days and eight nights," in order that thereby they might recall his temporarily absent soul to its original body. In this state of death the ancient Japanese taught that there is consciousness; that this belief once actually existed can be proved by the tradition that the soul of Tamichi, the ancient brave warrior of Japan, when he was killed in battle by the hostile troops of the Emishi or Ainu, never lost its consciousness, even though his body perished. The conscious dead, so far still alive, has need of his servants, horses, weapons, and so on, just as in his lifetime; consequently, we have the so-called "Junshi" or servants accompanying their master in death to the Underworld by being entombed along with his corpse. This horrible custom was prohibited by an Edict of the Emperor Kotoku in the year 646, when the Emperor had the administrative organization of the Empire revised. Thus the grave is a place where the soul or spirit of the dead resides, and in case the dead are deified, the grave de facto can be turned to a shrine where the divine spirit, which is a god, is to be worshipped.¹⁴

Hades - The land of the dead is called "Yomi-no-Kuni," meaning "Yami-no-Kuni" or the land of darkness, or "Tokoyo-no-Kuni" or the land eternal night. The land of darkness is a region, gloomy, filthy and polluted, situated at the remotest corner beneath the earth, as the ancient Japanese believed. Being filthy and polluted, visitors necessarily were required on their return from it to cleanse themselves in lustral waters, as according to tradition, Izanagi purified his

14. ibid., p. 43.

contaminated body after he had visited the Underworld. Therefore to the ancient Japanese, death is a pollution, so that even utterance of the words "death" and "grave" is to be avoided in the holy precincts of Ise Shrine.¹⁵

Paradise - Takama-ga-Hara or the Plain of High Heaven is where the Shinto deities dwell. The Plain of High Heaven is an ideal celestial region to which the souls of the dead of high ranks, not of common mortals, are believed to ascend in a similar way as the Sun-Goddess and the Moon-God, who, though born on earth, were sent up to Plain of High Heaven by their Divine Parents Izanagi and Izanami, or as Izanagi himself returned to Heaven when he had fulfilled his commissioned duties in this world. It is the brilliant ethereal domain of the glorious sun, while this land of Yamato or Japan is where the sun was born - Nihon or Nippon meaning the birth place or cradle of the sun - and so Japan is a land of light, a place of endless sunshine. The peculiar twist at the last statement must comfort the common people who are denied a place in the Plain of High Heaven.¹⁶

From this short analysis, we can see that Ancient Shinto merely provides a scant form, into which the individual is left to incorporate that which fills the needs which satisfy his soul. Those who are inclined to metaphysics and meditation can adopt Buddhist doctrines. For those who are practical and seek tangible results, Confucian ethics can be incorporated. Japanese history has demonstrated that this can be done and has been done.

15. ibid., p. 44.

16. ibid., p. 45.

2. Man in his expressions toward God.

a. Rites

Man expresses in various ways what he feels that he owes to God or what he thinks or knows God demands of him. One of the most common is community worship. Shinto has from ancient times been connected with agriculture. Therefore we find the expression of the Japanese largely in the hope and gratitude for blessings in crops and factors pertaining to that occupation.

One of the most important festivals is Niinaematsuri or Autumnal Harvest Festival. We can trace the origin of the festival to the Divine Age, when, tradition says, the Japanese people lived in the Plain of High Heaven. At that time Amaterasu-Omikami herself conducted the Feast of New Rice Crops in Heaven.

In the Harvest Festival the new rice obtained in that year is offered up to the family or clannish deities and at the same time it is served to all the kinfolk. Therefore it is a communal feast between deities and men - a holy communion, we might say, in a religious community in old Japan.

At the beginning of the year, too, as husbandmen commence their spring work in the paddy fields, a festival of prayer to the deities for bountiful autumnal crops is conducted.

According to the Engishiki, the Annual Shinto Festivals are classified into three as follows:

(I) The Greater Festival:

The Oniematsuri (Kaijosai) or Great Harvest Festival at the Ceremony of the Enthronement of the Emperor.

(II) The Middle Festivals:

- (1) The Toshigoimatsuri (Kinensai) or Festival for Praying for Rich Harvest.
- (2) The Tsukinamimatsuri or Monthly Festivals.
- (3) The Kanniematsuri (Kannamematsuri or Jinjosai) or Imperial Festival at the Ise Shrine on which occasion new rice of the year is presented to the Ancestral Sun-Goddess.
- (4) The Niinaematsuri (Niinamematsuri or Shinjosai) or Autumnal Festival (the Feast of New Rice Crops.)
- (5) The Festival of the Kamo Shrine.

(III) Lesser Festivals:

- (1) The Oimi-no-Matsuri or Festival of Praying for Abundant Rice Crops at the Hirose Shrine.
- (2) The Kazenokami-Matsuri or Festival for Propitiating the Wind-God to Favor a Rich Harvest for the Year.
- (3) The Hanashizume-no-Matsuri or Festival of Appeasing the Evil Deities of Epidemic Diseases.
- (4) The Saigusa-no-Matsuri or Festival of the Izagawa Shrine in Komori-Machi, Nara, when the sake-casks sacred to the Deity were decorated with "saigusa" or wild lily flowers.
- (5) The Ainiematsuri (Ainamematsuri) or Feast of New Rice Crops before the Niinaematsuri.
- (6) The Mitamashizume-no-Matsuri or Spirit-quieting Ceremony.
- (7) The Hishizume-no-Matsuri or Festival of Appeasing the Fire-God.
- (8) The Michiaematsuri or Festival of the Road Deities.
- (9) The Sono-Karakami-no-Matsuri or Festival of the Sono and Kara Deities worshipped at the Imperial Household Department.
- (10) The Festival of the Matsuno Shrine.
- (11) The Festival of the Hirano Shrine.
- (12) The Festival of the Kasuga Shrine.
- (13) The Festival of the Oharano Shrine.¹⁷

From this list we see that a majority of the more important festivals are connected with agriculture. Agriculture is the main concern of the people that time.

b. Sacrifices.

Man feels he must give God something and most often he finds objects

17. ibid., pp. 96-102.

for offerings among his possessions. The extent of his expression is according to what he values and how much he desires to offer in accord with custom. Sacrificial offerings in Shinto usually consist of rice, vegetables, edible sea-weed, sake, fishes, birds, animals, etc. At the festival in honor of Mitoshi-no-Kami the Deity of Rice Crops, a white horse, a white wild boar, and a white fowl are sacrificed, according to the Ritual of Praying for Rich Harvest and the Kogoshui. To the Deity of the Nifukawakami Shrine either a white or a black horse is very often offered in order thereby to implore rain or to have long continued rains stopped. According to the Nihongi, in 642 (the reign of the Empress Kogyoku), horses and cattle were sacrificed to the deities of various shrines. The extreme in offerings is human sacrifice. Cases of human sacrifice are very often mentioned in Japanese historical books of old, but some of them are quite legendary, and those deities that are so blood-thirsty and cruel in character as to require a human victim seem to be few. The legendary maiden Kushinadahime was to be sacrificed to a monster serpent, regarded as an awful deity, on the upper reaches of the River Hi in Izumo. In the reign of the Emperor Nintoku, a certain Kowakubi of Musashi Province was sacrificed to the River-Deity to appease it and induce it not to break the embankments of the river. When Prince Yamatotakeru was overtaken by a violent storm, while on a sea voyage, his consort Tachibana-hime voluntarily sacrificed herself by plunging into the sea in order that the life of the Imperial Prince might be preserved. The "hitobashira" or "human pillar," as it is called, frequent at the building of bridges across rivers, and during river or seashore embankment works,

may be considered as a kind of human sacrifice. The case of the hitobashira of a certain Sekihachi-Yasutaka in the 16th century is to be considered historically genuine. In order to make complete the embankment works of the Asase-Ishikawa River, he sacrificed himself most willingly, thereby appeasing the anger of the River-Deity, and at the same time constituting himself forever the guardian spirit of the river. "Junchi" is a wife's self-immolation that she might accompany her husband after death or a retainer's suicide in order to follow his dead lord to another world. Japanese history has numerous instances of such sacrifices. The Emperors Suinin and Kotoku forbade such barbarous customs, and the Ryo-no-Gige compiled in the year 833 (the 10th year of Tencho) tells us that, by Imperial Command, similar prohibition was made in Shinano, where they were prevalent.¹⁸

c. Priesthood

For group worship leadership is necessary. A priesthood is usually established. At the very beginning ancient Shinto seems to have had no priestly corporation to speak of, or at any rate no well organized body.

As a rule the pater families of each family is the chief priest. The head of each family is both father and priest. While living, he is called the ujinokami or the head of the family and he becomes the ujigami or tutelary God of the family after his death. Thus Amaterasu-Onikami, the Ancestress of the Japanese Imperial Family, is at once a sovereign and a priestess, because she herself in the Plain of High Heaven is traditionally reported by the ancient

18. ibid., p. 103-05.

Chronicles as making divine ceremonial robes as a votive gift to the Heavenly Deities. And each local Kokuso or chieftain is also a priest as well as the political governor of a locality.

In time of trouble, however, we have a specially inspired personage, whose duty it is to disclose the divine will to the people at large; as, for example, Ame-no-Uzume played before the Heavenly Rock-Cave the part of an inspired religious dancer to entice the Sun-Goddess to come out from her retreat.

The Empress Jingo and Ikatsu-no-Omi, according to the Nihongi, were possessed by the deities, at the time of war with Korea. Otataneko, in the reign of the Emperor Sujin, and the sibyl Himeko of Tsukushi, are both divinely inspired personages. In the Divine Age Ame-no-Hohi-no-Mikoto and his descendants were attached to the Izumo Shrine as hereditary priests in charge of the worship of Okuninushi-no-Kami of Izumo; and Toyosuki-Irihime and Nunaki-Irihime were Imperial Guardian Priestesses, each taking charge of one of the two shrines, when the Emperor Sujin ordered the removal of the Divine Mirror and Sword from the Imperial Palace in honor of those two Divine Imperial Regalia.

From the Divine Age, besides those religious personages, certain hereditary corporations claimed the exclusive privilege of the charge of the State Shinto rites. They are the Nakatomi, the Imbe and the Sarume families, and later on the Urabe family was added to these.¹⁹ Thus it is that the ancient Japanese worshipped their gods. Throughout this study, the question occurs in our minds time and time again, Just what benefit do the people derive from this religion, besides

19. ibid., p. 110-12.

the negative comfort, that of alleviation from the fear of the gods. Shinto is not capable of giving benefits for the soul and wisely leaves that to the individual so that ultimately the individual is not disappointed in Shinto. At the same time because of its anciently historical nature of its form, Shinto holds its people by tradition and pride in their nation. The people do love their nation in spite of its shortcomings. Shinto and nation are closely related. To remove Shinto would be to make a new people. Only God can turn hearts and create a new man.

III. MODERN SHINTO

Introduction

Shinto as it is today is our immediate interest. In the historical synopsis and brief analysis the scanty doctrinal nature of Shinto is evident. Our concern now is how these developments have been applied at the present time.

Our thesis is that Shinto is a form or skeleton upon which the individual hangs his doctrine and needs as he finds it necessary and convenient. One fact must not be overlooked or ignored. That is the backbone of the skeleton, the one doctrine of Shinto that the emperor rules by divine right.

Modern Shinto bears out the thesis in a distinct way, the separation of State Shinto and sectarian Shinto. This occurred in 1882 by law. The distinction is made by titles and by relationship to the government. To State Shinto shrines (Kokka Shinto) is reserved the title of jinja, literally "god house." The sectarian institutions are to be called Kyokai, "churches." This second group of Shinto bodies are separated from direct relationship with the state and support.¹ Nagao Ariga in an article in the Tetsugaku Zasshi (Philosophical Magazine) June 1910 explains this distinction and the reasons that led to the division of Shinto into two classes:

In the case of a civilized country there must exist freedom of faith. If Shinto is a religion, however, the acceptance or refusal must be left to personal choice. Yet for a Japanese subject to refuse to honour the ancestors of the Emperor is disloyal. Indeed, a Japanese out of his duty as subject must honour the ancestor of the Emperor. This cannot be a matter of choice. It is a duty. Therefore

1. D. C. Holtom, The National Faith of Japan, p. 67f.

this cannot be regarded as a religion. It is a ritual. It is the ceremony of gratitude to ancestors. In this respect the government protects the shrines and does not expound doctrines. On the other hand, since it is possible to establish doctrines with regard to the (Shinto) deities, it is necessary to permit freedom of belief in Shinto considered as religion. Hence there has arisen the necessity of making a distinction between Shinto regarded as the functioning of national ritual and that Shinto which proclaims doctrines as a religion.

The National Association of Shinto Priests tried to clarify the distinction with a statement in the Kokugakuin Zasshi (monthly magazine of the Shinto College of Tokyo), July 1932 issue. Part of it states:

The fundamental differences are as follows:

I. Doctrines

The existence of certain specified doctrine is essential to Sectarian Shinto. In the case of the shrines this condition does not obtain. All the branches of Sectarian Shinto without exception possess certain special religious affirmations which serve as their sectarian standards; in other words, they possess doctrines. As a matter of fact these are a fundamental condition of the origin of Sectarian Shinto and apart from the attempt to induce people to believe these doctrines and to lead them accordingly it would have been impossible for Sectarian Shinto to have come into existence. To be sure, among these teachings which we have called doctrines there are some that are not systematized in any particular literary document or sacred scripture. Certain teachings exist merely as moral exhortations or by mutual consent. This matter, however, simply concerns difference in degree. It remains true that the primary condition for the existence of all the branches of Sectarian Shinto is the acceptance, application, and propagation of certain special doctrines.

II. Founders

The Sectarian Shinto which promulgates these doctrines also naturally possesses individual sect founders. That is to say, all the branches of Sectarian Shinto go back to certain persons who at first themselves believed the teachings which constituted the basis of organization, and who proclaimed these teachings and induced others to believe and propagate

2. ibid., p. 69f.

them. That is, there exist of necessity sect-fathers, founders, and organizers.

In the case of the shrines, however, nothing resembling this exists.

III. Religious Organizations

Inasmuch as the existence of Sectarian Shinto depends on the possession and propagation of doctrines, it is essential that the necessary organizations be provided for the dissemination of the teachings. This makes a clear point of distinction between the shrines and Sectarian Shinto which establishes agencies of propaganda and organizes into a single body the adherents who believe particular doctrines. As has been already pointed out, since the shrines do not propagate doctrines and have no founders, it is not necessary that they have the religious organizations that accompany these. The various societies and organizations that are connected with the shrines are not established on the basis of the acceptance of some special doctrines, and for this reason it is not inconsistent for one and the same person to have membership in two or more of these shrine societies.³

Briefly summarized State Shinto claims to perpetuate the authentic and traditional beliefs and rituals of the Japanese race and declares that it has developed spontaneously in the national life without the aid of individual historical founders. The shrines receive supervision and a measure of financial support from village, municipal, prefectural or national government, depending on the grade of the particular shrine. Special legal enactments regulate the affairs of the shrines in matters of organization, priesthood and ceremony.

Sectarian Shinto, on the other hand, like other religious organizations maintain their own independent organizations and their legal properties are totally distinct from those of the State Shinto shrines. These sects have originated from the faith and activities of historical founders. They carry on a definite religious propaganda; employing

3. D. C. Holtom, Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism, p. 31f.

teachers and preachers; maintaining churches, chapels, schools and social welfare activities; conducting religious services which are comprised of exhortation and instruction, prayer and ritualistic adoration; and publish a vast amount of literature.

When the written constitution was issued in 1889 one of the articles guaranteed a freedom of religious faith to all subjects within limits not prejudicial to the maintainance of peace and order and damaging to the duty of the officials of the government. The reason for this freedom of religion and classification of Shinto is declared by some that the Meiji statesmen were avoiding a collision with Christianity, which at the time had the support of Western nations that Japan could not afford to offend. However, there is no law or ordinance that states in so many words that State Shinto is not a religion.⁴

In view of this fact numerous scholars and clergymen of various faiths have advanced the premise that State Shinto is actually a religion, but the government has maintained consistently that it is not a religion. Recently the state has forced this interpretation. This fact can be seen "in practice" by the action of Christianity in Japan today. Christianity had the alternative of persecution and martyrdom or compromise and accommodation. The Japanese Christian church chose the latter, although as late as 1930 the National Christian Council of Japan issued a protest that State Shinto was religious. Under the demands of governmental standardization, 1936 the Council went on record with the declaration, reversing

4. ibid., p. 39.

its former stand. "We accept the definition of the government that the Shinto shrine is non-religious."⁵ Another example of the insistence of Shinto upon its non-religious status is the stand of the Catholic Church.

In 1918 the Bishop of Nagasaki boldly made this proclamation:

The members of the Catholic Church, without hesitation, will join in paying due reverence toward the nation's distinguished men as a part of patriotic duty. Nevertheless, however generous our frame of mind may be with regard to this view of the shrines, we cannot give our support to it..... Shrine worship is indeed poor in religious ideas judged from the inner worth of religion, but is amply furnished with a wealth of ceremonies fixed by law. It is an organized form of reverence paid to supernatural beings and must be regarded as a religion. Moreover, it is a religion forced upon the people, and if it be different from Shinto, it may not inappropriately be called shrine religion..... We regret exceedingly that as Catholics we cannot accept the interpretation of shrine worship given by the government nor can we visit the shrines and engage in the services for the dead nor can we ever pay respect to the so-called gods.⁶

As late as 1931 the bishop of the same diocese, himself a Japanese, declared that State Shinto was "only a primitive religion."⁷ But the pressure of national standardization won out over the Roman church. On May 25, 1936, the Office of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide at Rome, after a review of the entire problem by the College of Cardinals, directed Catholic believers in Japan to accept the official definition of the non-religious nature of State Shinto and comply with the governmental requirements in the matter of participation in the shrine ceremonies. The document is worded:

The Ordinaries in the territories of the Japanese Empire

5. ibid., p. 97.

6. ibid., p. 98.

7. ibid., p. 98.

shall instruct the faithful that, to the ceremonies which are held at the Jinja administered civilly by the Government, there is attributed by the civil authorities and by the common estimation of cultured persons a mere significance of patriotism, namely, a meaning of filial reverence toward the Imperial Family and to the heroes of the country; therefore, since ceremonies of this kind are endowed with a purely civil value, it is lawful for Catholics to join in them and act in accordance with the other citizens after having made known their intentions, if this be necessary for the removal of any false interpretations of their acts.⁸

Thus there is actually a separation of State Shinto and all religions, including sectarian Shinto. The governmental strength manifested by State Shinto also supports that part of the thesis which is summarized in the words, Shinto is the principle of Japan, and demonstrates too that the individual's faith must be in accord with this principle.

Latest available statistics, which show the separation of Shinto, are: Sectarian Shinto reports 16,238 churches, 124,877 teachers, preachers and priests, and 17,607,605 adherents. State Shinto reports 15,801 priests and 110,234 shrines. No statistics of the adherents are published since theoretically every Japanese is considered a legitimate parishioner; thus the statistics of adherents to State Shinto include the total population of the empire.⁹

The study of modern Shinto will be limited to the State Shinto since to include sectarian Shinto in this paper would be beyond the thesis that Shinto is merely a form. Sectarian Shinto is classified correctly with Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity by the Imperial Government in regard to its purpose of providing the needs of the individual souls which Shinto leaves to the individual.

8. ibid., p. 99.

9. ibid., p. 38f.

State Shinto

The worship of the gods and regard for ceremonies are the great proprieties of the Empire and the fundamental principles of national polity and education.... On this occasion of the restoration, Tokyo has been made the new capital and the Emperor shall reign in person. First of all rituals shall be initiated and the administration of law and order shall be established. Thus the Way of the unity of religion and government shall be revived.¹⁰

With these words Shinto and modern Japan were introduced. The words are from the imperial edict of the first year of Meiji (1868). It summarizes well the intent of both Shinto and Japan since these two are, as they stand today, inseparable. The two are an important part of each other. To make this unmistakably clear, in 1870, two more edicts were promulgated. The first establishes the unity of religion and state.

From the very beginning of the establishment of the affairs of government by the Great Ancestress, she worshiped the gods and cherished the people with tender affection. The origin of the unity of religion and the state is long ago.¹¹

The second edict affirms the first but in greater detail.

We solemnly announce: The Heavenly Deities and the Great Ancestress established the throne and made the succession secure. The line of Emperors in unbroken succession entered into possession thereof and handed it on. Religious ceremonies and government were one and the same and the innumerable subjects were united. Government and education were clear to those above, while below them the manners and customs of the people were beautiful. Beginning with the Middle ages, however, there were sometimes seasons of decay alternating with seasons of progress. Sometimes the Way was plain, sometimes darkened; and the period in which government and education failed to flourish was long.

Now in the cycle of fate all things have become new. Polity and education must be made clear to the nation and the

10. ibid., p. 5.

11. ibid., p. 5f.

Great Way of obedience to the gods must be promulgated. Therefore we newly appoint propagandists to proclaim this to the nation. Do you our subjects keep this commandment in mind?¹²

The political unity is culminated with an explanation of the status of the Emperor. The words are quoted from a book, "Kokutai no Hongi" (The Fundamental Principles of the National Structure) issued in 1937 by the Department of Education. It states:

The Emperor by means of religious ceremonies becomes one with the divine imperial ancestors, and through participation in the spirit of the imperial ancestors, He is able to educate the subjects of the state ever more and more and promote their prosperity. In this way the spirit wherewith the Emperor rules the country is imparted. For this reason the worship of the gods on the part of the Emperor and His administration of government are in their fundamental aspects one and same thing. Furthermore the Emperor is the custodian and executor of the testaments of the ancestors and with these He makes clear the great principles on which the nation was founded and the Great Way in which the subjects should walk. In these consist the great essentials of our education. Thus, education in its fundamental aspects is unified with religious ceremonies and government and education have each their own separate operations, yet in the last analysis they are one and the same.¹³

There is no doubt that the Shinto depends upon the nation for its survival and the nation depends upon Shinto for unity and power.

To this end several dogmas have been established. These dogmas show the purpose and intent of Shinto as it has developed today.

12. ibid., p. 6.

13. ibid., p. 7.

The Three Dogmas

1. The first dogma is the unbroken divine imperial sovereignty. This is the primary dictum of all Japanese education and the foundation on which the entire state is erected. "The Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal," is the first article of the written Constitution of 1889.¹⁴ How well this dogma has been taught the people is indicated by the people themselves. The uppermost pride in their nation is the fact that they have the longest single dynasty of emperors in the world's history. It is speculation to think of how the strength and unity of Japan would be had the continuous line of emperors had been broken. Judging from the temperament of individuals, disunity would be logical and most probable. Perhaps the political situation of China could be drawn as a comparison. Nevertheless the dogma stands as a fact as well as can be ascertained historically. The succession of emperors has extended to this day from mythological times. To this dogma the people will cling even though for merely sentimental reasons. It is a pride in an uniqueness. Since the human mind does not always maintain the correct value of matters, quite often it exaggerates value.

The third article of the Constitution reads, "The Emperor is sacred and inviolable."¹⁵ The emperor by virtue of the unbroken dynasty beginning in mythology is divine. But there is no official statement that exactly defines the sacredness or divinity of the emperor. Interpretations range from the view which binds the conscience to the emperor

14. ibid., p. 7.

15. ibid., p. 7.

and make him the chief object of worship in home and state to the other extreme which is the politico-humanistic view. In reality the emperor is divine because he is the living extension of the great divine ancestors of the past, in particular, of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu-Omikami, by whose will and wisdom the state was originally founded.

Prince Ito, who was chiefly responsible for the written Constitution of 1889, says in his "Commentaries on the Constitution",

The Sacred Throne was established at the time when the heavens and the earth became separated. The Emperor is Heaven descended, divine and sacred; He is preeminent above all his subjects. He must be revered and is inviolable. He has indeed to pay due respect to the law, but the law has no power to hold him accountable to it. Not only shall there be no irreverence for the Emperor's person, but also He shall not be made a topic of derogatory comment nor one of discussion.¹⁶

The children are educated to this dogma. The "National History for Ordinary Primary Schools" issued by the Department of Education says of the descent of the August Grandchild, "The foundations of our national structure with its single line of emperors unbroken through the centuries, which shall not be moved throughout all ages, were in truth laid at this time."¹⁷ Children reared in this theology are less likely later to question the dogma.

This first dogma is firmly established in the hearts and minds of the people. They themselves in their love for the nation do not want to give it up.

16. ibid., p. 9.

17. ibid., p. 17.

This dogma holds the ruler and people alike responsible to the gods for the protection and development of the state. In recent years, Japan has produced an unusual succession of premiers, yet no matter how these men have differed among themselves, they have been one in making known to the nation their sense of responsibility to the gods. An example of this spirit is the address of prime minister, Admiral Mitsu-masa Yonai, delivered on February 1, 1940.

History shows that whenever an emergency arises, our national spirit is most emphatically manifested to advance the prestige and fortune of the nation. It is incumbent upon us to leave no stone unturned in order to promote loyalty and bravery on the home front as well, and to replenish and demonstrate our nation's powers, for which are required the inculcation of the spirit of reverence for deities and respect for ancestors, the renovation of national education and the improvement of the people's physical strength.¹⁸

This statement illustrates the dependence of the government upon Shinto which, in turn, is strengthened.

The second dogma is a necessary complement to the first dogma. It makes the people a definite part of Shinto.

To support this first dogma words of Amaterasu Omikami are used.

This Reed-plain Land of Fifteen Thousand Autumns of Fair Rice-ears is the country over which my descendants shall be lords. Do thou, my August Grandchild, proceed thither and rule over it. Go! and may prosperity attend thy dynasty, and it shall, like Heaven and Earth, endure forever.¹⁹

18. ibid., p. 19.

19. ibid., p. 17.

2. The second dogma is the belief in a special guardianship extended to the land and its people by the ancestral deities.

Emperor Meiji declared,

Our ancestors in Heaven watch our acts, and We recognize our responsibility to them for the faithful discharge of Our high duties, in accordance with the principles and the perpetual increase of the glory they have bequeathed to Us.²⁰

Japan is "the Land of the Gods" is heard frequently. The dogma is established in ancient mythology in the premise that the land was created by the gods and everything - land, trees, animals, people - are a part of the Deities. We might term this dogma a reciprocal agreement. It attaches the people to the nation and to Shinto, by making them a part of the system.

Confronted by the culture of the West and unwilling to give up the dogma, the people have developed an unique introspection. They discuss the possession of unique and superior racial qualities in morals and history. In this way they have developed and trained themselves in these qualities. A general list is: an unique loyalty and patriotism, a special endowment of assimilative power which can take in the best of foreign culture and yet remain forever Japanese, unusual powers of organization, an unrivaled capacity for expansion and achievement, reverence for ancestors and regard for family name, a this-worldly and practical nature, love of natural beauty, an artistic and refined skill (particularly manual skill), candor and openheartedness, optimism, unique regard for purity and cleanliness, propriety and orderliness, and, finally, a gentle and forbearing disposition.²¹

20. ibid., p. 14.

21. ibid., p. 15.

3. The third dogma, which is recent in establishment, is the conviction of Japan that she is to be the savior of the world. It is an unusual application of the first two dogmas.

The dogma claims authorization in two imperial edicts of Jimmu Tenno, the first emperor, found in the Nihongi. The first is:

I think that this land will undoubtedly be suitable for the extension of the Heavenly task, so that its glory should fill the universe. It is, doubtless, the center of the world.²²

The second, which was once used by Hirata to justify Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea, reads:

In regard to matters that are above, We shall respond to the goodness of the Heavenly Powers in granting us the Kingdom. In regard to matters that are below, We shall foster righteousness and extend the line of the imperial descendants. Thus, hereafter, the capital shall be extended so as to embrace all the six quarters (north, south, east, west, zenith, and nadir) and the universe shall be covered so as to form a roof.²³

From this quotation has developed the slogan, Hakko Ichi-u (The Whole World under One Roof). Prince Konoye affirms this: "The basic aim of Japan's national policy lies in the firm establishment of world peace in accordance with the lofty spirit of Hakko Ichi-u, in which the country was founded."²⁴

The third dogma is a recent addition and is a clothing of Shinto's form. It is a doctrine of individuals, the military class, and not part of Shinto as it has stood for years. It may be abandoned sooner or later.

22. ibid., p. 20.

23. ibid., p. 21.

24. ibid., p. 22.

Conclusion

The first two dogmas have stood for centuries and supports the thesis that there is one doctrine insisted upon by Shinto - that the emperor rules by divine authority.

Many scholars assert that the Imperial Rescript on Education of October 30, 1890 is the doctrine of Shinto. It seems to be the summary of present day Shinto, including the more recent historical influence, namely Confucianism.

The text is:

Know Ye, Our Subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education. Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore, advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye be not only Our good and faithful subjects but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.

The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible in all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may attain to the same virtue.

The 30th day of the 10th month of the 23rd year of Meiji.
(October 30, 1890) (Imperial Sign Manual, Imperial Seal)²⁵

At the present and perhaps for sometime in the future this Rescript may stand as a "Confession" of Shinto but the skeleton will remain much longer in a simpler form as long as Shinto survives.

The question, What work can we, as Christians, do in Japan seems discouraging. The one doctrine of Shinto that the Emperor rules by divine right conflicts with the Christian conscience. Since Shinto and the Japanese nation are so integrated a severe change is necessary. Dr. Genchi Kato is of this opinion, affirming the conclusion of this paper:

Since a national religion which is closely united with the Japanese Empire in the form of State Shinto still reigns all over the country, it is in vain that an imported religion exerts itself with the object of extirpating and supplanting this national religion of Japan. Because such a religion could succeed in its mission only after having exterminated the Japanese nation and destroyed the national polity or the fundamental form and character of our nation. If anyone wishes to propagate anew religion in Japan, I believe that he has no other means than to admit, in the spirit of conciliation, the friendly relation of the two religions, both the indigenous and the foreign----- There is no other means than this for the diffusion of an imported religion among the Japanese people, believers as they are in the nationalistic Shinto, ready to defend the indigenous religion at the cost of their lives, under the rule of the divine Emperor.²⁶

With trust we look to God to bring about the change of devotion and we ask His strength to be with the ambassadors of the reconciliation which He has wrought.

26. ibid., p. 96.

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